

CITY AUDITOR'S OFFICE



SPECIAL REPORT

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES OF THE CITY COUNCIL OFFICES

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RADFORD K. SNELDING, CPA, CIA, CFE

CITY AUDITOR

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THE CITY COUNCIL OFFICES
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BACKGROUND

We performed this review at the request of the City of Las Vegas Audit Committee. The Las Vegas City Council is comprised of the Mayor and six Council members. The City Council Offices, including the Mayor's Office, have 23 support staff who are full-time city employees. The City Manager's Office provides administrative support and oversight to the City Council Offices.

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to evaluate the current administrative practices of the Las Vegas City Council Offices.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork was performed in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards. Procedures included:

- Interviewing personnel;
- Observing operations and activities;
- Reviewing records, reports, and other applicable documentation; and
- Discussions and correspondence with other municipalities.

The scope of our work was limited to a review of the administrative practices of the support staff of the City Council members.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Auditor's Office appreciates the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by City Council members and their staff. The following issues were identified during the course of our work. While other issues were identified and discussed with management, they were deemed less significant for reporting purposes.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AND TRACKING OF WORK HOURS

Criteria:

- Positive reporting of actual hours worked and the nature of work performed provides increased accountability by employees and useful productivity and workload data for management.

Condition:

- City Council staff often work irregular hours and away from City Hall due to the nature of their jobs (e.g. attending neighborhood meetings, responding to constituent matters).
- Payroll reporting for city appointive employees, including City Council staff, is on an exception basis (only leave time is reported). City Council staff do not formally record or report their actual hours worked or the nature of work performed.
- Payroll time cards are approved using submitted leave slips and limited information regarding actual hours worked.

Cause:

- Limited direct oversight of City Council staff.
- Exception payroll reporting.

Effect:

- Limited accountability.
- Potential abuse of time worked.

Recommendation:

1. City Council staff should at a minimum be required to record daily hours worked and to submit this information to the time card approver. Furthermore, valuable information could be obtained by requiring City Council staff to identify the nature of work performed during these hours.

2. COUNCIL ACTION REQUEST SYSTEM (CARS)

Criteria:

- In order for system data to be useful, consistent, and comparable for performance assessment and management decisions, data input guidelines must be established and employee training provided.
- The distribution of customer service surveys provides useful feedback on the adequacy of service.
- A system user needs assessment helps measure the adequacy of a system and identify additional functionality needed by users.

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Condition:

- CARS is used by City Council Offices to track constituent complaints and their resolution. Most issues input into CARS are forwarded to City departments for resolution.
- The extent of use of CARS varies between Council Offices.
- While individual training on CARS is available, no formal training program exists.
- No formal objectives or guidelines exist on the use of CARS and not all complaints are input into CARS.
- Feedback on the adequacy of the City's response to citizen complaints is not formally obtained or tracked.
- A formal user needs assessment of CARS has not been completed.

Cause:

- Lack of consistency and conformity in the use of CARS between Council Offices.
- No established guidelines on the use of CARS.

Effect:

- Summary reports from CARS are incomplete and limited in their usefulness.
- Lack of data on the adequacy of the City's response to citizen issues and complaints.

Recommendations:

1. Formal guidelines for the input of data into CARS should be established and implemented and a formalized CARS training program should be created.
2. Customer service surveys should be distributed (by mail or e-mail) or other data gathering methods used upon resolution of a citizen issue or complaint to obtain feedback on the adequacy of the City's response.
3. A user needs assessment of CARS including input from those employees that input data into CARS and those that use system reports should be completed to measure the adequacy of the system and identify additional functionality needed by users.

3. LOGGING OF GIFTS

Criteria:

- To ensure the completeness and accuracy of disclosure information, guidelines for tracking the information must be established.

Condition:

- Elected officials and city employees must annually disclose gifts received if the gifts meet established criteria under the Municipal Code and Nevada Revised Statutes.
- While the City Council Offices track information on gifts received, the information being tracked is not consistent between the offices.

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Cause:

- Lack of direction on this issue to Council Offices.

Effect:

- Potential of incomplete or inaccurate information for reporting purposes.

Recommendation:

1. Gift forms/logs used by the City Council Offices should include at a minimum the following common elements to simplify the annual reporting process and ensure compliance with annual gift disclosure rules:
 - source of the gift
 - name of the donor
 - address of the donor
 - value of the gift
 - description of the gift
 - date on which the gift was received
 - identification as to whether gift was accepted or donated
 - identification of donee if gift was donated

4. OFFICE PROTOCOL

Criteria:

- An office procedures manual is a helpful reference for new employees and can help communicate and encourage adherence to policies and prevent possible confusion or misunderstandings among personnel.
- An organization chart is helpful in defining employee accountability and to whom employees are accountable. In addition, an organization chart can prevent misunderstandings of responsibility and increase administrative efficiency.

Condition:

- No office procedures manual specific to the operations of the City Council Offices exists.
- No formal organization chart outlining delegation of authority exists for the City Council Offices.

Cause:

- Issues not addressed by management.

Effect:

- Potential for misunderstandings of policies and procedures and lines of authority.

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Recommendation:

1. An office procedures manual and an organization chart should be created for the City Council Offices.

5. CITY COUNCIL STAFF ORIENTATION

Criteria:

- Orientation programs can be useful for training new staff on an organization's policies and procedures and operations.

Condition:

- In the course of their job duties, City Council staff must interact with many city departments and employees. An understanding of the operations of the city departments and key contacts within these departments is valuable in working with the departments and in responding to constituent inquiries.
- While the City Manager's Office provides training to City Council staff in a monthly meeting, no formal orientation program tailored to the needs of City Council staff exists.

Cause:

- Inadequate formalized orientation.

Effect:

- New City Council staff must take the initiative themselves to learn the City's operations and key contacts within city departments.
- Potential for inadequate or inaccurate responses to citizen inquiries.

Recommendation:

1. An orientation program tailored to the needs of City Council staff should be created and implemented.

6. MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

Criteria:

- City employees who use their personal vehicle on City business are reimbursed for the mileage incurred provided the employee submits the proper form.

Condition:

- City Council staff represented to us that they use their personal vehicles extensively on City business. However, during fiscal year 2000-2001, only five City Council staff requested

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reimbursement for mileage totaling \$1,397 (\$1,266 to two staff in the Mayor's Office and \$131 to three City Council staff).

Cause:

- Impression that reimbursement process is burdensome.
- Influence of staff who do not submit for mileage reimbursement.

Effect:

- Certain staff may not be reimbursed appropriately for their use of their personal vehicle while on city business.

Recommendations:

1. City Council staff should be reminded that they are eligible to participate in the mileage reimbursement program.
2. The creation and use of a standard mileage listing of frequented visited sites or the use of a standard internet mileage calculator could further simplify the mileage reporting process for City Council staff and encourage participation in the reimbursement program.